

2 University of Bridgeport women engineers win honors

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Dr. Jani Macari Pallis, a faculty member, and Subrina Thompson, a graduate student, both at the University of Bridgeport School of Engineering, are finalists in the Women of Innovation Awards 2009 sponsored by the Connecticut Technology Council. Both women live in Stamford.

The awards recognize women in the work force and students from across Connecticut who are innovators, role models and leaders in their field.

There are 52 women who are finalists for the eight awards to be announced during the 2009 Women of Innovation Awards Dinner at the Aqua Turf Club in Southington on Jan. 29. The finalists include researchers, educators, managers, business owners, service providers, students and high school youths. Awards are made for innovation and leadership in academic, collegian, community, entrepreneurial, large business, research, small business and youth areas.

Pallis is an associate professor in the Department of Technology Management at the University of Bridgeport. She has conducted research and development for both government and industry, and led numerous pre-college education projects including three education collaborations at the national level with NASA. She has 33 years of industry experience and is the founder and CEO of an engineering and research firm. With a background in industrial, mechanical and aeronautical engineering, she specializes in fluid dynamics, with an emphasis on air, space and marine vehicles, sports equipment, and the relationship between athletic injuries and equipment. Her current research interests include the application of fluid dynamics to alternative sustainable energy generation, sustainability within the sporting goods industry, engineering of sports equipment, next generation lunar and Martian vehicles and aging aircraft.



Women of Innovation Award finalists Dr. Jani Macari Pallis, left, Subrina Thompson, and School of Engineering Dean Tarek Sobh.

Pallis received her bachelor's and master's degrees from the Georgia Institute of Technology, a master's degree in mechanical engineering from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Ph.D. in mechanical and aeronautical engineering from the University of California, Davis.

As the principal investigator of NASA's "Aerodynamics in Sports" project, she led a team of researchers investigating the aerodynamics, physics and biomechanics of tennis. The group conducted high-speed video data capture at the US Open and research of ball/court interaction, footwork, serve speeds, trajectories and ball aerodynamics. She is also the principal investigator on a third NASA collaboration as called "Math To The Moon ... And Beyond" which developed mathematics educational materials for NASA Explorer Schools for grades 4-9 for use during 2005-2009, focusing on space flight, space operations and space exploration.

Pallis is the author of many technical papers, including a monthly column on tennis science, engineering and technology (www.tennisserver.com/set). With Dr. Rabindra Mehta of NASA Ames Research Center she is the author of the upcoming book, "Aerodynamics and Hydrodynamics in Sports."

Ms. Thompson, from Jamaica, received her B.S degree cum laude in Computer Science from the University of Bridgeport and is currently pursuing two master of science degrees, in Computer Science and Technology Management. She was the recipient of the university's Academic Achievement Award in Computer Science in 2007 and was also awarded the 2007 Upsilon Pi Epsilon Computing Science Honor Society Scholarship Award. She was selected on her academic record, extra curricular activities and the recommendation of the UPE advisor. UPE officials stated that they believe Thompson "will establish an admirable record for subsequent holders of this award to emulate."

At UB, Thompson has been on the Dean's List and the President's List every semester since Fall 2004. She is a NACME Scholar, and is member of the UPE Honors Society. She was a member of the ACM Programming team and competed in a contest held at Westfield State University.

In addition to receiving excellent grades in her courses, Dean Tarek Sobh said Thompson "continuously proves to be a responsible, initiative and enthusiastic student who takes a great care in her work, which together with her continuous desire to achieve more, makes her a highly skilled student. She speaks and writes English well, which enables her to express herself proficiently. She is a pleasant character with an exceptional ability to work well with others. She has excellent fundamental knowledge, high perseverance and very high intellectual abilities and independence. She also has a good capacity for analytical thinking and excellent abilities to organize and express ideas clearly."

Thompson is executive chairman of the Bridgeport chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers, a tutor for the group, the UB Society of Women Engineers, a member of the university's Ballroom Dance Team, and has developed Websites for UB's College of Chiropractic, the NAACP and the Witness Project of Connecticut.

Thompson was an intern at Goldman Sachs in the summer of 2008, and based on her performance, that offer was extended to a fulltime position starting upon completion of her master's degrees in May 2009.

The Connecticut Technology Council is a network of businesses and entrepreneurs and has corporate support from AT&T, Oracle, United Technologies, Boehringer Ingelheim and a host of other leading firms and businesses.